



Blocking Kampfgruppe Peiper: The 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment in the Battle of the Bulge

Frank Van Lunteren

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In December 1944 an enormous German army group crashed through the thin American line in the Ardennes forest. Caught by surprise, the Allies were initially only able to throw two divisions of paratroopers to buttress the collapse the 82nd Airborne, which was rushed to the area of St. Vith, and the 101st, which was trucked to Bastogne. After their successful campaign in Holland, Colonel Reuben Tucker's elite 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment was resting and refitting in France when news came of the German breakthrough. Most dangerous to the Allies was the German spearhead of the 1st SS Panzer Division led by Jochen Peiper, which aimed to sever the Allied front. The 504th was committed to block the SS advance, and within 48 hours of their arrival Colonel Tucker's paratroopers were attacking the SS-Panzer grenadiers of Peiper's battle group, eventually forcing them to withdraw. More ferocious fighting ensued as follow-up German units forced a U.S. retreat from St. Vith. In adverse weather conditions against the German 9th SS Panzer and 3rd Fallschirmjäger Divisions, the 504th lived up to its regimental motto--Strike and Hold. Although some rifle companies were whittled down to less than 50 paratroopers, the Americans doggedly fought on until victory was achieved. Moving quotations of letters to the next-of-kin provide insight into the impact of their deaths both on the battlefield and homefront. In this work Van Lunteren provides a fascinating, close-in view of the 504th P.I.R. during the Battle of the Bulge as well as its gallant sacrifice. Using never before published diaries, letters, battle reports and interviews with over 100 veterans, a comprehensive account is painted of a triumphant U.S. regiment in one of the fiercest fought campaigns in the history of the U.S. Army. REVIEWS Military historian Frank van Lunteren set himself three tall-order tasks: ferret out all relevant primary sources, no matter how obscure; weave the evidence together into an engaging narrative (and crafting clear tactical accounts is among the toughest of writing chores); and produce the most thorough history of the part played by the officers and men of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment in the Ardennes Campaign. Blocking Kampfgruppe Peiper scores high on all counts. D.K.R. Crosswell, author of Beetle: The Life of General Walter Bedell Smith Blocking Kampfgruppe Peiper continues Frank van Lunteren's superb series on the famed 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment during World War II. Masterfully telling the gripping account of little-known battles against the best-equipped, most elite and fanatical troops of the Waffen SS panzer divisions, the author details the brutal battles waged on the northern shoulder of the Bulge in Germany's last, desperate offensive during the freezing winter of 1944-1945. Over a hundred interviews, including many new and never-before-published first-person eyewitness accounts by both 504th veterans and their German adversaries take the reader into the midst of the fighting as Tucker's troopers charge across open ground to attack armored flak wagons and heavy reconnaissance vehicles with little more than small arms, grenades and machine guns. Van Lunteren's work stands as a lasting testament to the tremendous heroism and devotion to duty of the tough paratroopers of the 504th. I highly recommend this outstanding book. Phil Nordyke, 82nd Airborne Division historian and author of More Than Courage: The Combat History of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment in World War II and All American All the Way: The Combat History of the 82nd Airborne Division in World War II, and other titles. Frank van Lunteren gives us the rare privilege of hearing in personal and touching detail the stories of the Battle of the Bulge as recounted by the paratroopers of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment. Never have I actually felt the cold and desperation of the Bulge as I did while reading this book. Enduring the most brutal conditions of the winter war, the 504th went face-to-face with elite Waffen SS in Germany's final bid to conquer Europe. Blocking Kampfgruppe Peiper is a timeless saga of courage, determination and victory. --Barbara Gavin Fauntleroy, author of The General and His Daughter: The Wartime Letters of General James M. Gavin to His Daughter Barbara. Full of first-hand accounts by 504 Parachute Infantry

Paratroopers who fought at the Battle of the Bulge, Blocking Kampfgruppe Peiper chronicles the long-overlooked contributions of the regiment in this pivotal battle of World War II. Frank van Lunteren has researched and compiled the personal accounts of these "Devils in Baggy Pants" into a story destined to be a lasting testament to the sheer determination and bravery of these men." Dominic T. Biello, webmaster, www.ww2-airborne.us"

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